AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION AND PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
U.S. Patent No.: 09/915,027

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1-57 (Cancelled).

58. (Previously Presented) A method for processing a slaughtered bird carcass suspended by its legs, wherein the carcass comprises a spine, a stomach, skin comprising belly skin, and belly fat and wherein the spine defines a longitudinal axis, the method comprising:

a) introducing a separating means into the carcass of the bird through a hole in the skin; and

b) breaking at least one tissue connection in the belly fat by moving the separating means relative to the carcass between the stomach and the belly skin in a plane which extends substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis;

c) removing the separating means from the carcass; and

d) inserting an eviscerating means into the carcass after removing the separating means.

59. (Cancelled).

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the separating means is rotated within the carcass.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the separating means is moved in a scraping manner between the stomach of the bird and belly fat situated on the inside of the belly skin.

62. (Previously Presented) A device for processing a slaughtered bird carcass, wherein the carcass comprises a spine, a stomach, skin comprising belly skin, and belly fat, wherein the spine defines a longitudinal axis, the device comprising separating means adapted to enter the

carcass through a hole in the skin when the carcass is suspended by its legs and to move relative to the carcass between the belly skin and the stomach in a plane which extends substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis, wherein the separating means is not adapted to remove viscera from the carcass.

63. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 62, further comprising first moving means for moving the separating means in the carcass through a hole in the skin.

64. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 63, wherein the first moving means move the separating means in a rotating manner.

65. (Original) The device of claim 62, wherein the separating means are in the form of scraping means.

66. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 63, further comprising second moving means for placing a protection element in the carcass prior to or during moving the separating means in the carcass.

67. (Currently Amended) A method for breaking at least one tissue connection in ~~the belly fat of~~ a slaughtered bird prior to insertion of an eviscerating means into the bird, wherein the bird comprises a spine defining a longitudinal axis, skin comprising belly skin, belly fat, and viscera, the method comprising inserting a substantially elongated element with a free end under the ~~skin of the~~ belly skin of the bird through a hole in the skin, wherein inserting the elongated element comprises:

inserting a protection element through the hole in the skin and into the bird to protect the viscera as the free end of the elongated element is moved within the ~~carcass of the~~ bird, wherein the protection element comprises a stop face adapted for pushing the viscera away from the hole;

positioning the free end of the elongated element in the hole near the stop face; and

rotating the elongated element relative to the bird about ~~a~~ an axis substantially ~~vertical~~ parallel to the longitudinal axis to insert the free end of the elongated element under the skin and

to move the free end of the elongated element away from the stop face, the free end thereby breaking the at least one tissue connection in the belly fat of the bird.

68. (Currently Amended) A device for breaking at least one tissue connection in ~~the belly fat of~~ a slaughtered bird comprising a spine defining a longitudinal axis, skin comprising belly skin, belly fat, and viscera prior to evisceration of the bird, the device comprising:

a substantially elongated element having a free end for insertion under the ~~skin of the~~ belly skin of the bird;

a protection element for insertion into the bird through a hole in the skin to protect the viscera as the free end of the elongated element is moved within the ~~careass of the~~ bird, wherein the protection element comprises a stop face adapted for pushing the viscera away from the hole; and

moving means for positioning the free end of the elongated element in the hole near the stop face and for rotating the elongated element relative to the bird about ~~a~~ an axis substantially ~~vertical~~ parallel to the longitudinal axis for inserting the free end of the elongated element under the skin and for moving the free end of the elongated element away from the stop face to thereby break the at least one tissue connection in the belly fat.

69. (Original) The device of claim 68, wherein the protection element is plate-shaped.

70. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 58, wherein the hole in the skin is an opening obtained by cutting out [[the]] a vent.

71. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 63, wherein the hole in the skin is an opening obtained by cutting out [[the]] a vent.

72. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 68, wherein the hole in the skin is an opening obtained by cutting out [[the]] a vent.

Claims 73 and 74 (Cancelled).

75. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 67, wherein the hole in the skin is an opening obtained by cutting out [[the]] a vent.

76. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the separating means is positioned at a selected position relative to the breastbone of the bird.

77. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 62, wherein the separating means is configured to be positioned at a selected position relative to the breastbone of the bird.

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein the separating means is positioned to move in the plane at a predetermined location in the belly fat.

79. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 62, wherein the separating means is configured to be positioned to move in the plane at a predetermined location in the belly fat.